



The Media Access Awards

For 23 years, the Media Access Awards have honored the entertainment and media industries with a gala Academy Awards-style evening celebrating Hollywood and the contributions made toward enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. The Media Access Awards recognize those who use the unique power of their medium to increase public awareness and understanding. By accurately portraying the experience of disability and employing people with disabilities, the entertainment and media industries enhance employment opportunities for all people with disabilities.

A recent study from the Screen Actors Guild shows that 20 percent of all Americans are living with a mental or physical disability, yet less than two percent of TV show characters display a disability. Increasing the inclusion of disability in what we see and hear can increase employment opportunities and the appreciation of disability as an important part of cultural diversity.

Toward that end, the California Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and the California Employment Development Department, along with Hollywood professionals and members of the disability community, have developed a unique resource for the entertainment and media industries. The Media Access Office actively promotes the employment and accurate portrayals of persons with disabilities by offering a variety of services including a casting liaison, script consultation, educational and technical assistance, and career development aid for industry professionals with disabilities.

Each year, staff of the Media Access Office working with its coalition of support organizations including industry guilds, produce the Media Access Awards focusing on two categories of award winners. Individuals who have shown a lifelong dedication or made significant contributions to raising the awareness of the experience of disability are selected for honoree awards. In addition, productions, performances, and printed materials are recognized for employing people with disabilities, casting actors with disabilities in non-traditional roles, accurately depicting people with disabilities as part of the diverse American landscape, and increasing understanding through innovative and creative productions.

This year's Media Access Awards event is scheduled for October 15, 2006. The Globe Theater at Universal Studios will play host to the event complete with a red carpet arrival of several hundred invited guests. The evening begins with a welcoming reception, followed by the awards program presented with the assistance of numerous Hollywood performers and professionals. Made possible by donations, the awards celebrate the important, powerful role of the media and entertainment industries to broaden the education of the general public and promote a society that understands and values the experience of disability.